MINIMEMOIRS
OF
SWEET BRIAR DAYS

by

Jovan De Rocco

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MINIMEMOIRS

OF

SWEET BRIAR DAYS

To Susan

with love

J. DeR.

Written and drawn

for his former colleagues and students

and presented with love

by

JOVAN DE ROCCO

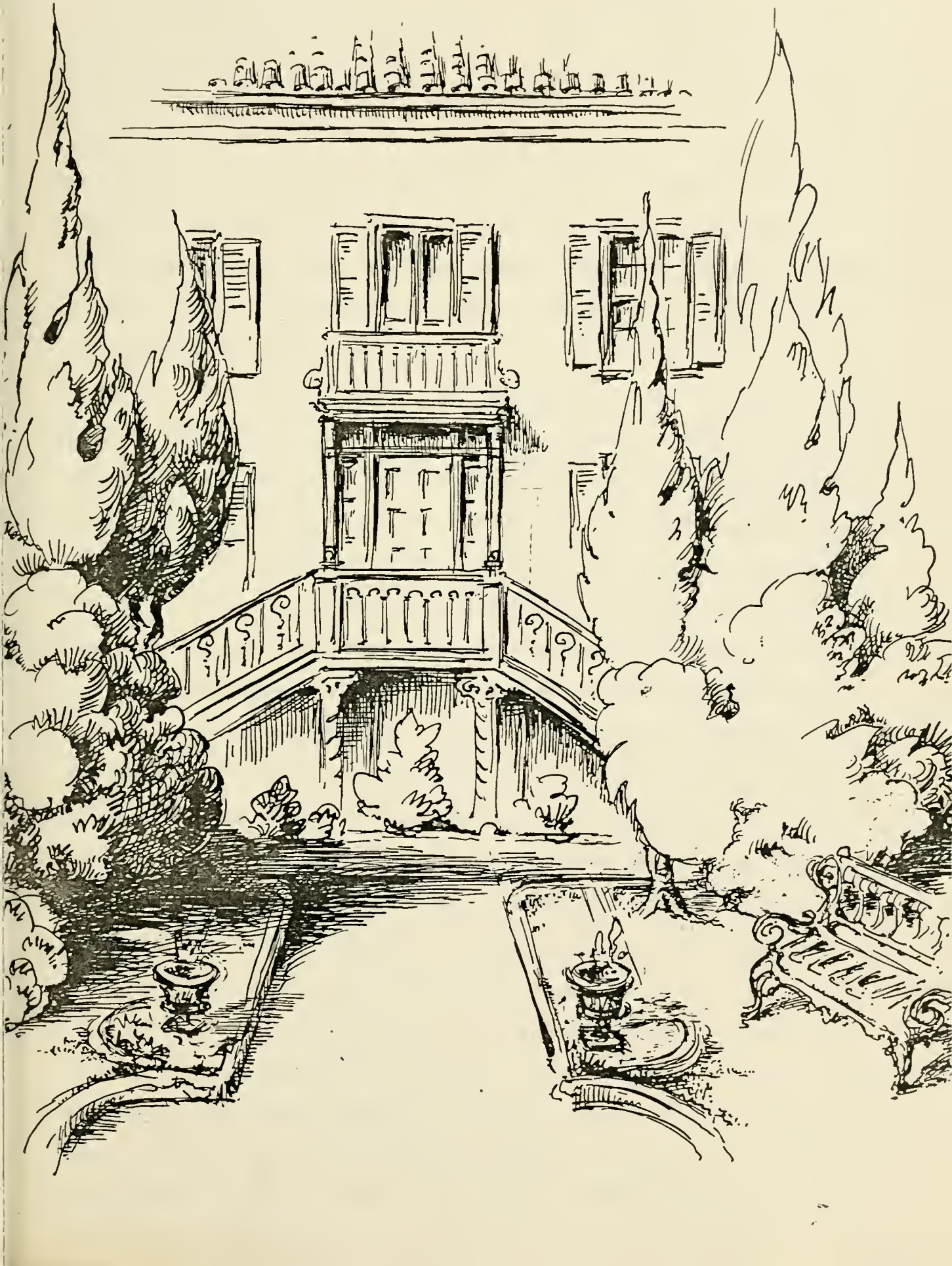
Sanibel Island - Florida

1981

1

There was a certain sense of unhurried harmony, even majesty, in the orbits of the soaring buzzards overhead and the red earth all around gave even a greater luster to the opulent vegetation rising out of it. A certain nobiliy and grace mark those who had lived on that land and off that land for centuries. Even an occasional scar of erosion a[illegible] only added a tired richness to it all, together with the sagging barn roofs and leaning poles and fences. That was at least so in my time in Virginia, which came to an end over two decades ago.

The old plantation house which Peter Williams had bought north of Amherst (where I lived) was a two-story and basement brick structure, flanked by fireplace chimneys at each end. It had been in total neglect for no one knew how many years. Even the long driveway to it had been lost under the avid growth of that region. Peter was led to it as an afterthought of an exhausted real estate agent and at the end of a day of futil searching. This was a last attempt before sunset. But Peter's wife Manning, who was born in Lynchburg, twenty miles to the south, took to the spirit of the place immediately. It suited Peter perfectly, too, for he wanted to get away from city appearances as far as he could, having shaken Broadway dust off his feet, after a successful career as a stage set designer. Now he was ready for the full unfoldment of his many talents, particularly in the field of ceramics. Manning, too, had written many "whodunits" and was looking forward to writing more.



As soon as they moved in, Peter got busy, spurred on by his boundless energy and inexhaustible inventive spirit. In the living room he stripped the walls of plaster down to the old wood lath. He launched himself on long-range renovations of the interior and one of the first thing he did to the exterior was to restore the broken-down and partly non-existent wrought-iron railing to the one-time formal stairs leading to the piano nobile. He was undaunted by the challenge of the elaborate iron work and so he restored the missing terminal focal point to the ancient boxwood-lined approach. The long-lost dignity came back.

But there was more to this plantation house than the atmosphere that surrounded it. Shortly after Peter and Manning moved in they were awakened one night by the sounds of their piano, now temporarily in the second-floor hall. The single notes were hit at random and as if someone had idely amused himself. It was no mouse or cat running over the keys, as some friends had suggested. Peter told me of this incident with his charactertic serene amusement and no trace of annoyance or concern. It was all "diverting", as he was fond of this Henry-Lamesian adjective. But he was intrigued enough to pursue the mystery further and so one day he improvised a planchette, by scrathing the alphabet on a square piece of board he happened to have around. So he and Manning got into a session and the contact was immediate. The correspndent's name was Agness. Who Agness was and what her connection with the house no one ever knew, but she proved to be highly communicative and ever on call. The sessions became frequant and Peter soon realized the planchette sessions would be a good way to entertain friends. Agness always obliged.

One aftertoon I called on the Williamses and brought with me Florence Robinson, who was head of the Sweet Briar art department at the time. I had also invited Gage Bush, a student of mine, whom I admired for her sensitiveness, grace, and maturity beyond her age, but just exactly why and how I singled her out I am not sure today. After we had our tea, Peter took a piece of what

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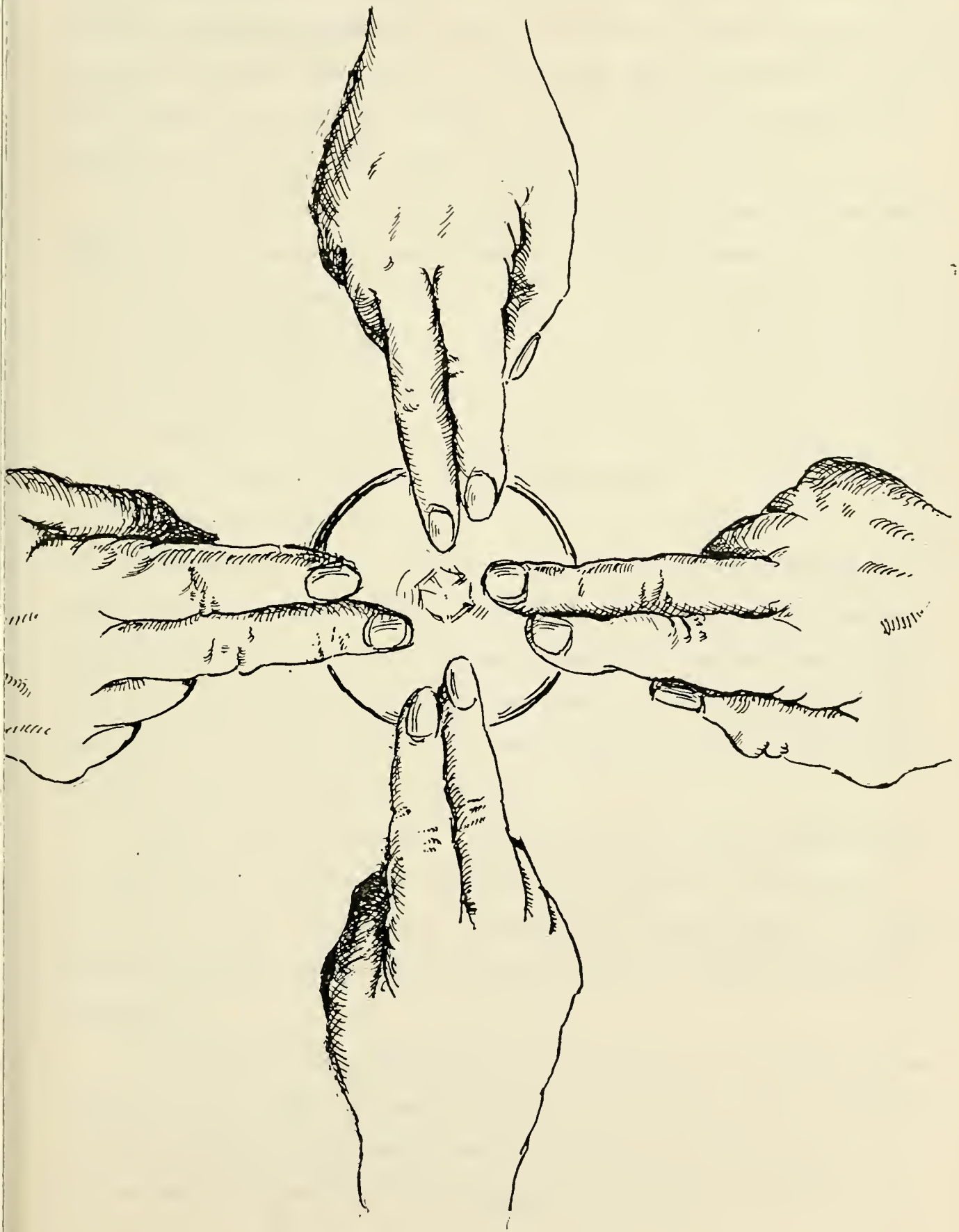
was then known to artists as pebble board, a kind of heavy cardboard with a surface as rough as the name implies. In his blithe and breezy way he scrached in a grid and the alphabet. Then he placed the planchette on the table and seated us around, himself facing Florence and myself facing Gage. Then each of us placed two fingers on the base of an upturned long-stem glass. Manning stood by as the interviewer...



Manning began with casual ease, deftly and fluently, with challenging questions. The glass responded promptly, gliding effortlessly actoss the rough surface of the board hither and yon, in sweeping dashes and strokes, as if not even touching the surface of the board. I felt as if only the others were causing all the motion, and no doubt each person felt the same.

It was Agness again. The first few sentences she uttered made not much sense, with some incoherance and hesitation, and Manning asked:

"Are you drunk again?"

"Yes," Agness answered.

"What did you get drunk on?"

"On spirits."

Then the glass spelled out this off-hand offer:

"Agness can be had..."

There being no response on our part, Agness withdrew and was heard no more during that session. She was followed by a woman who said her name was Coyen Lofus. She was a niece of Thomas Jefferson, she averred, and she gave us the date of her birth in Roman numerals, some time in the late eighteenth century. (The Jefferson family tree which I obtained from the Charlottesville Historical Society contained no such name.)

Mannig's questions continued to be searching and suitable, smooth and as if rehearsed. The characters appeared from nowhere and so Coyen Loftus was followed by a Mr. Abbott, who had come down from "Ebony Glenn, New Jersey." He had been driven down, he said, but didn't like at all "these new-fangled inventions."

The presence of Gage Bush must have contributed to the vividness of the session. She was a girl of peaceful charm and quiet wisdom. Then I recalled meeting her mother at some college function and how she told me that Gage had been a poleomelitis victim in her early youth and confined to bed

indefinitely. One day she rose from her bed, stood erect, thrust forward her arms, the palms upturned, her gaze heavenward, and so she walked across the room "every whit whole." She attended high school and a school of dance at the same time. I was told about fifteen years ago that Gage had a school of danc of her own in her native Birningham, Alabama.

That "other world" was not strange to Gage. She had been living with her family in a house originally owned by a Mr. Percy (the brother of a well-know writer of the time), who had committed sucide in that very house by firing a shotgun. After the Bush family had moved in, the same shot was heard from time to time and loud enough to rouse the neghborhood. One day police came to the entrance door, to Gage's and her mother's great embarrassment, and they were tempted to say, O never mind, it is only Mr. Percy again. Eventually it all stopped.

The session at Williamses that afternoon ended with a message from an unknown person to me: "Follow Miss Robinson and pray for peace." It took me all these years to suspect that it wasn't the world peace that might have been meant (Second World War having ended a few years before) but the peace with Miss Robinson, whom I had rudely antagonized on some occasions - one of my many remorses of that time; and "following her" might have been taken in the same sense. Well, anyway, if the actuality of the present is an illusion, as seen by many, how much more may the past be seen in the same light.

Signlehanded Peter had built a writer's studio for Manning, all concrete blocks on a concrete slab, and a much larger workshop for his own ceramics. He had more commissions from Sweet Briar students for cermaic gift pieces than he could meet. It was a buoyant and joyous life. And that is how I left Peter when in 1958 I came north to Pennsylvania. There continued an occasional correspndence between us and his last letter ended with "Keep in touch."

But one day some time later I ran into a friend from Amherst, who was vacationing in the Poconos, and this is what he told me:

Manning's mental health, which had shown signs of weakness even during my time there, had deteriorated to such extent that Peter had to take her and commit her to an institution in Shenandoah Valley. The dreaded mission over, Peter returned home and sat down and wrote a letter to the Amhers sheriff. In it he accurately and calmly described where he would be found the next day, in the garden, on such and such a bench (the one on the side of the formal appraach to the house). He mailed the letter and then went on to be the guest at a dinner party. In the morning the cheriff followed the instructions and found Peter as described, a gun beside him. But Peter's beloved cat was nowhere to be found. He had sent her on before him.

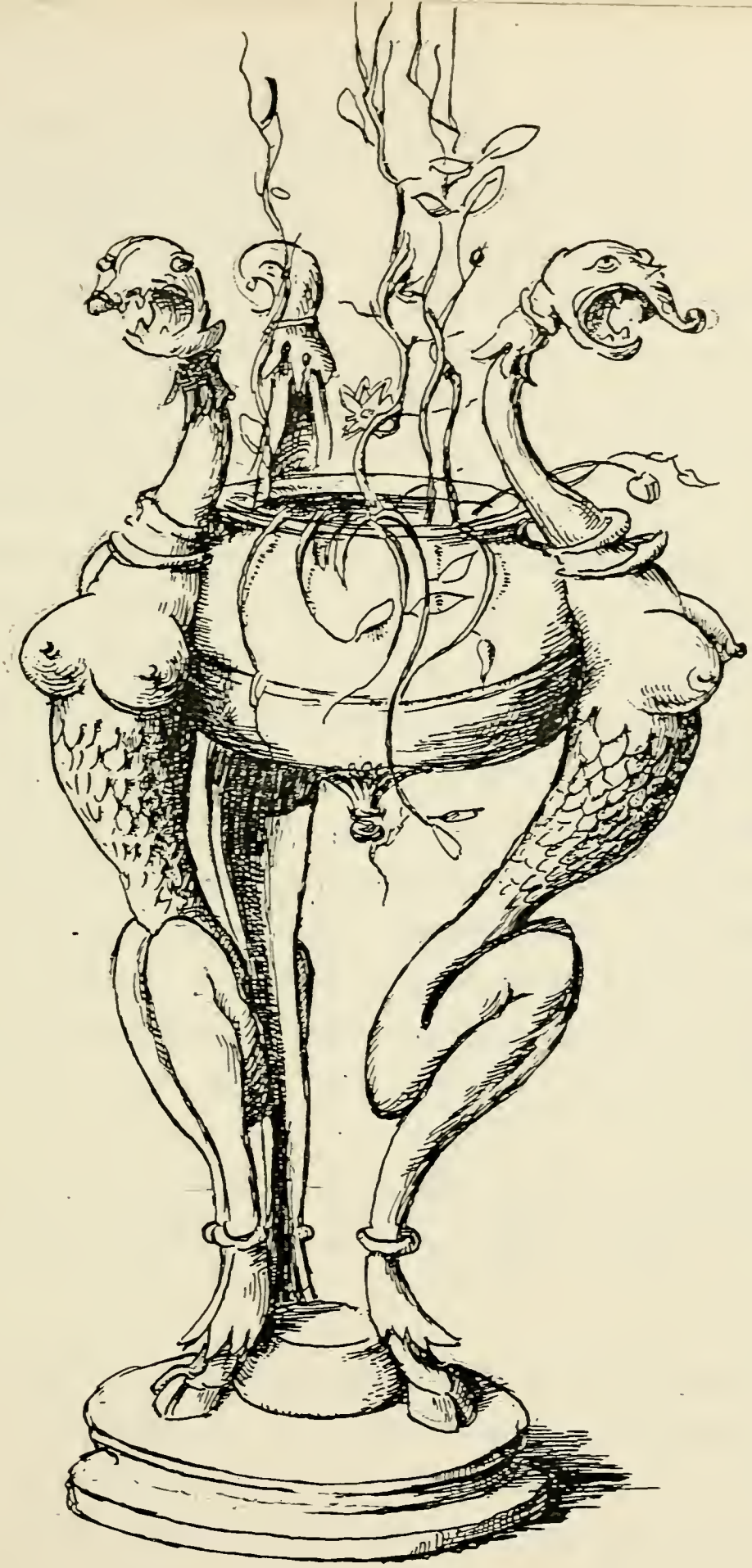
Grief for Manning? Perhaps. But how much the house had to do with it all will never be known.

I was suceptible to the enchantments and the mysteries of Virginia. The turbulent, opulent clouds; the drama of the sunsets; the earth, sometimes irretrievably scarred, as if weeping red tears; the frequent thunderstorms and the bolts that can, and do, strike twice in one place and that only minutes apart; firy balls that come down the chimney, flash in the fireplace, runing across the roo as a ball. Occult experiences rose suitably out of such settings. And so one night: by the misty glow of a full moon, a friend and I were returning from a walk to Sweet Briar Lake. In the hazy distance, about a hundred yards away, a slim and erect young woman walked across the scene from right to left, with a light and hasty step. She was wrapped in a faded gray-greenish shawl, covering her head and arms and a basket over her arm, all like something I could have seen only in the days of my Serbian childhood. Her stride was purposeful, rapid, and graceful, but led nowhere, to a brink and then the lake below. My friend and I stopped our conversation and took a few steps to the right, the better to follow the hastening figure passing behind trees. Then she vanished.

On another occasion another friend and I were Sunday dinner guests at an old plantation house again, which had been bought recently by our hosts and thoroughly renovated. During the meal we heard some light and fast feminine steps descending a stairway adjoining the dining room. My friend and I looked at each other across the table, then at our hosts, expecting some remark about a possible house guest left to herself upstairs, now going out. But nothing. Our hosts however quickly added that there have been some foolish rumors about certain sounds occuring in their house, But that was nothing but some loose planks of a nearby bridge that rattled every time a car went accross it. That was all.

However, it might be added that about a year later the lady of the house suddenly departed and the bereft husband sold the house at once.

And now a final addition to our gallery of hosts and ghosts. The same friend of that walk back from Sweet Briar Lake and I were Sunday dinner gusts at another old plantation house. What I most vividly remember of that occasion was a center piece which graced the dinner table. The picture of it has been stored away in my visual memory all of these thirty years or so and I can evoke the haunting grotesque apparition even now. Let it speak through this drawing as a symbolic heading to the whole episode.



As I recall the dinner table, on the left of that solid silver centerpiece, barely above the heavy damask table cloth, there shone a pair of blue-gray eyes; frigid almost a vapor emanating out of them as out of dry ice. That and a dark brown face was all I could see of my tiny hostess. Above her towered a tall back of an ornate antique chair almost up to the butler's chin. Nothing that transpired at this dinner party can be seen as noteworthy, but what had taken place a few years earlier, could. Some time later this was related to me:

One day the husband of my hostess was found hanging from one of the pipes along the ceiling of the mansion's basement. Proper authorities were notofied and a case of suicide ascertained. Later, however, it leaked out somehow that the feet were touching the ground. But in those days justice was sometimes the handmaid of wealth and what was considered prominence.

A spectacular followed. A large assembly of friends and invited guests stood in suspenceful waiting in the main hall of the mansion, The bier, spotlighted, in the center and mountains of flowers around. At the proper time the bereft widow slowly descended the stairs, supressing sobs in a laced handkerchief, and threw herself over the remains. The solemn quietness of the scene was marred only by the gentle purring of a deftly conceiled movie camera.

It may not be irrelevant to mention that a few days later the butler was found drowned in the shallow pool of the estate, face down.

But enough of this necro-goriness. It was all only a subjective experience, now swallowed by the past and totally contrary to my present views and to what my friends know of me. It was all subjective, all unreal, doubly unreal, if all we see and experience is but a projection of our own mind, carnal mind, as St. Paul called it. When I was about five, I thought that seeing was an out-going process. Once my father detected that beilief in something

I had said, and corrected me. Now I wonder if my father was right. He would not have been in Plato's eyes, who, through his Timaus said that "The gods contrived eyes to give light." And then: "The pure fire which is within they made to flow through the eyes in a stream smooth and dense." And again: "The eye is affected by the object, and itself strikes and touches it." Undeniably the eye "strikes and touches"; for a person who may be with the back to us or a person a block away, may feel it be felt.

Another thought that tormented me at the same time of infancy was the question of what would there be if there were nothing? I could not conceive of absolute nothingness, nor can I today, nor can any one. For "isness" means consciousness and consciousness cannot be nothing.

But now to return for a moment to the plantation days. As did Peter Williams's house, so did also Sweet Briar House, now the residence of college presidents but originally of the Williamses, who were the owners of the plantation, reminded me, if even distantly, of the flavor that emanated from Villa Cetinale near Siena, in Italy, which I visited and whose stately layout I skethed back in 1928. The formal linear layout of the Villa's grounds struck a magic note in my heart, when I examined it recently, after the drawing had lain in dark cupboards for over half a century, and it fairly spoke to me, poining out with the five distinct organic parts of its layout, some five corresponding phases of my life, Sweet Briar being one of them, -- the villa itself.

VILLA CETIN

8 Miles FROM

(Near Velletri)

Chigi - Zondad

Theatre. a plastered
(red + yellow ochre surface)
around an hista
on top. Cypress
trees thickened au
tops cut off.

Approach

Statue
in a niche

red
cypress

red + yellow tones a prim'd clipped
cypress. Approaching we saw a plant
with flaming
red bracts
just beginning

Detail of
GATE A

CLIPPED HEDGES

WALL

GATE A

LAWN

THEATRE

TERRACE

DRIVEWAY

PRESENT
SERVANTS HOUSE

HOUSE

WALL

TERRACE

Sweet Briar House is only of wood, a faint imitation of the arches of the "Old World," and yet its boxwood surroundings may bid to compete, if even only faint with the mysterious cypresses and arches of the Cetinale. But one distinction that could have been envied even in the Renaissance, was the old apple orchard, acres and acres of apple blossoms in the spring, which were a famous showplace and attraction for visitors from afar. That was so in my time. But later the orchard was mercilessly cut down. The reason? "Hard to maintain." Lack of sensitivity, I would say.

A smaller item but equally manifesting a lack of sensitivity, at least in the eyes of this observer, was Daisy Williams's room at Sweet Briar House, which contained her harp, books of her childhood, a diary, and other memoarabilia. It was all thrown out and disappeared. The reason? A powder room was needed. Lack of sensitivity again, as many of us thought. In later years I was told that even all the antique furniture, forming a historic whole with the old plantation house, was thrown out and scattered through the dormitories. Again what else but insensitivity?

What would the antidote be? I thought then and I still think now, art instruction. All disciplines, but art, when it comes to the visual aspect. And this is where my own teaching of art - a provilege I stll so humbly cherish - can possibly come in for some degree of justification. My goal was not to turn students into artists nor to stuff their minds with dates and horizontal classifications of a multitude of art works of the past, each of which with a merit of its own regradless of the time and trends and schools and influences. My goal was to make even an ever so small contribution to the students' sensitivity, where it was needed, as well as to point out the human values as reflected in the products of the human genius. Quality instead of quantity, above all, and benevolent flight of imagination above the practical fact, for "man does not live by bread alone." All this because in art - architecure, sculpture, and painting - the slightest line or the slightest correction

of a line becomes essential. Not time, not how long or how much, but how well, thus cultivating soul with a small s , which leads to Soul with a capital S.

And so if in the middle of a lecture, with, say, Titian's Venus of Unrbino on the screen (accompanied by a suppressed gigle or two) a hand went up and the question is asked: "How long did it take him to paint that?" then I felt I was in the right place. Quality over quantity and taste over time.

In my own experience time proved to noneaxitent and eighteen years passed as one day and every day a new beginning, and as at first beginnings [illegible], It was not all roses, and I had been warned it wouldn't be, but then the thorns were all of my own making, or stemming from the causes within me. "What a man soweth.." etc. Education, taken or given, means purification. Yet, with it all, the task of teaching is a "strong drink," as Miss Glass, the president, used to say. Imparting ideas and encountering receptivity or challenging opposition was a source of gratification. Then to see the students go out into the luxiuriant nature surrounding the campus and bring back creditable landscape paintings, clear, strong, well organized and clearly modelled and always catching the basic reality and the essential shape and color, just as they were told to do, -- that was a gift from heaven to me. I wish I could include here, reproduced, some of the dozens and dozens of drawings and oil paitnings I still have as my cherished possession. Incidentally, the detachment and complete lack of self-seeking, seen in the fact that those unsung works of art were left behind, without ever giving it a thought, is a reward in itself and an educational plus. (No signature on the face was acceptable; only on the back.) Or to see them in the studio draw and paint from a piece of drapery with as much unerring feeling for the dynamic spacial relations as a master painter, that was also a reward. They were simply asked to discern the nearest geometric shape

first, then the middle-tone of the object, that is to say, neither the glare of light nor the emptiness of darkness. That was a discipline that not only led to a successful painting, but it carried over into life itself. For the glare of success may be as evil as the depth of failure. Thus the importance of the middle-tone. That term itself, together with the appetite for the basic and the abiding, I owe to the great teachings of Kenneth Hays Miller at the Art Students League in New York. He was a scholar of the best and the essnetial in the Renaissance tradition as well as a painter of considerable merit - before he turned exclusively to solutions instead of expressions.

My students were led to guard against easy clishés and always to go down to the root of things and not to be beguiled by the surface appearances — to be radical, in other words, in the true sense of the world. That provided also an antidote to the shallowness that breeds a craving for deceptive appearances and for the material ways of filling the vacuum. In other words, the necessity of relying on sense and not on the senses. For whatever stimulates the body to stimulate the mind is wrong and ends in pain.

As the last link with the antebellum days there lingered in the vicinity two dear old characters, both former slave girls. Signora (pronpunced Sig-nora), being the only name any one knew, had been Daisy Williams's playmate in her early youth. Now - and no one knew her age - she was nominally a cook, but more of a companion in the Jensen household. Mrs. Jensen (Jane Wetherlow) had taught English literature and Mr. Jensen had been a refectory chef, after a checkered carrer, which included the role of a "heavy" in some of Charlie Chaplin's pictures (so "heavy" in fact that and weighing 340 pounds, that a special seat had to be made for him in the company's auditorium). As a chef he was an "absolute ruler," who began a new college year by lining up

his kitchen staff outside the refectory and having them swear allegiance to the American flag. He had built his "Sans-Souci" somewhat in the style of his native Danemark and in what was then still the wilds of Amherst. It was there that I first knew Mrs. Jensen, her sister Mary, and Signora, since I lived nearby. The sisters were dedicated Christian Scientists and it was largely through them and through Jensen, while he was still with us, that I entered that field.

Occasionally I would go there Sunday evenings, don Jensen's tall chef's cap and ample apron and make pancakes, ending the evening reading aloud from "Pickwick Papers" and, as a change from Dickens, from Flaubert's "Madame Bovary," where I had to do some skipping here and there. Signora always sat in the background, silent, a knowing smile on her gentle face. She was a mine of picturesque fables and ghost stories. A sure way to get rid of ghosts was to read from the Bible backwards (word by word or letter by letter, I didn't ask). The absence in her mind of any line between fact and fiction was pure poetry to me, recalling the spirit of the best of the African sculpture in wood. Signora knew exactly where the silver and gold of the Williams family lay burried: "Fourteen steps along the boxwood hedge east of the house, then left five steps, and then poke down with an iron rod and you'll hit a flat stone. A box with silver and gold is under it." Another such cache was in the wall of the stair landing at Sweet Briar House. We never tried.

The other relique of slavery days was Aunt Alice (again, the only name we knew). She was ninety four at the time ("In my ninety fourth year," she corrected me once when I took some students to call on her). She summed up her life simply: "I have rked like a dog, I have lived like a lady." I can still see her silhouette along the path on the periphery of the campus, bent to the ground under a cloud of bundled-up laundry, which she took home to do. Her duty as a young slave girl was to ring the plantation bell and summon all the hands at meal time. "And they all had to come when I rang the bell!"

Courtesy The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

'The Great Parade' (1954): Oil on canvas by Fernand Léger

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
May 12, 1981

2

Picasso is a household word, but few people outside of the art world know of Bracque and Leger, and yet the three of them were celebrated forerunners of that striking, mysterious, revoutionary, puzzling, maligned and glorified movement in the art of the early part of this century. All the three were born in the same year. Picasso is still held at the pinnacle of the Olympus of art. Braque has already faded. Fernand Leger is in a way still holding his own, perhaps through the sheer weight of his work, which somehow has a cast iron spirit about it. And so just as I was writing this, I came across a favorable article on him in a daily newspaper, The Christian Science Monitor, from which this plate is feproduced.

When France was invaded by Hitler's amries during the Second World War, Leger managed to flee from Paris down to the Riviera and from there he took the last ship that sailed from Marseilles to America. While waiting, he spent his time on the beaches. The swimmers who were plunging from the many diving boards attracted his attention, as they made superimposed and interlaced patterns against each other in the air. He made many sketches, brought them with him, and then further developed them into innumerable studies in several media, pen-and-ink, pencil, gouache, oil. In New York Nelson Rockefeller comissioned Leger to do a large mural for the stair hall of his residence, and the "Divers" provided the theme.

Harmon Goldstone was Rockefeller's architect, the choice being

natural, for the two had been room-mates at Harvard. Harmon worked closely with Leger in placing the mural and he and I had been friends for many years and from the time I was a young draftsman in his father's office in New York, when Lafayette A. Goldstone had a large architectural practice in the busy twenties. Thus through Harmon Golsdtone I was able to approach Fernand Leger with an invitation to visit Sweet Briar and deliver a lecture. He took to it kindly, as Harmon informed me, and responded without delay. I had time enough to prepare the students' minds by presenting a mimeographed introduction into Leger's work. He arrived with a large bundle containing fifty of those studies of his "Plongeurs", or Divers. This provided material for an exciting exhibition, though radical in those days to some, for shortly after the opening I found a few of the pictures turned face to the wall! It wouldn't happen today. Leger made me a present of one of those studies, which hang in my art department office until my own departure some twelve years later, when I bequeathed it to the college.

The afternoon of the lecture I took Leger for a ride, to expose him to the charms of Virginia mountains and we went as far as Buena Vista. There we stopped and I took him into a country hardware store, of all things, for I knew of his penchant for tools and hardware, which he saw as object of art. Some axes, with their functional handles and bright red ends were just what he wanted to see. "Everywhere one goes in this country one sees objects of utility painted in gay colors!" That appealed to him. It happened so that the film he had composed and produced and shown that evening was mostly of an interplay of pots and pans and hardware objects of various kinds.

On our way back we passed a silvery water tank that shone against the blue sky and I remarked regretfully that it spoiled the scene. "O no!" he said, "I like that. That is popular taste." He had a reverence for "gout populaiare". He saw also a hand-colored picture post card,

(color photography was just beginning) on my desk, showing an empty parking lot at night, lighted, which some small town had published with pride and I was showing it to the students as an example of awfull taste. Again, "O non, c'est bon comme le gout populaire!"

The theme of Leger's lecture was to be "Le Nouveau Realism" and he elaborated on that subject as we were driving back. "What is it of?" people would ask in front of a picture," he said, "It is of itself!" he answered. "Why does it have to represent anything?" That, too, was a point worth defending in those days. "A vase of flowers, for instance, is what it is and it need not represent anything else. A picture has as much right to exist as a vase of flowers." That is what I mean by the New Realism." At that very moment we found ourselves creeping up a hill close behind a heavily loaded lumber truck and Leger suddenly exclaimed: "Eh voila! Ça, c'est le nouveau realism!" meaning, of course, the random relations of the logs, a perfect example of the varitey in unity which is the underlying characteristic of the behaviour of the inanimate thiggs in nature, such as clouds, smoke, raindrops on a marble top table, and so forth, as well as of the strokes of the brush of a proficient artist. Nothing could have illustrated better Leger's point. And that quality alone, even abstracted from a context, did occupy the eyes and hearts of some leading painters ever since Cezanne started playing with his apple-and-table cloth arrangements. (Jackson Pollock, and Mondrian, too, carried this preoccupation to a complete emancipation from any representation, leaving random only) That is why Leger considered Cezanne "the father of modern painting", and "if it hadn't been for Cezanne, I wouldn't be standing here before you today," as I was to hear him say in his lecture a few hours later. It might be added that the purest example of that random would the so-called Brownian movement of particles in a vacuum. Nature never fails in that random, only a sluggish mind does. I remember calling it "divine random" in my lectures, until I realized that God has nothing to do with it.- Heaven, yes, but only in contact with the earth.

It is a law of nature but laws are not to be goals in themselves but are meaningful only by virtue of their application. Leger's "New Realism" cared nothing for the subject itself, "le grand sujet" of the Renaissance and its aftermath, but only for the physical aspect, in the age of the physical. In a nutshell, it was all earth and no heaven.

The time of the lecture came. Leger and I mounted the platform and stood side by side. Then he would real off what seemed like an interminable sentence, a veritable Greek period, then cross his arms, draw himself up, clear his throat a bit and then as if to say, See what you can do with it! Fortuitously and most fortunately the night before Madame Johnson of the French department had given me to read an article Leger had written, which turned out to be almost word by word the present lecture. That helped. And so it all went well. But the strain surfaced only in the middle of the night and I woke up with a start: "Did I say Merrimé when I should have said Mallarmé, whose influence on modern art Leger praised?" But no, for he certaily would have caught the eror and would have corrected me, as he did in the following instance: Titian's "Venus of Urbino" was on the screen as an example of the "grand sujet," and Leger described it as "sensualism." I couldn't disagree with him more and so I left the word out of the long sentence, thinking he wouldn't know the difference. Not so! As I finished, Leger, before starting on the next sentence, added, emphasising every syllable: "sen-su-a-lism!" Well, so be it, but I still thought later, in the case of Boucher, above all in Renoir, sensualism perhaps, but in Titian's case nothing but humanism and homage to feminine beauty, which is potential motherhood. But where do you draw the line? Leger might have asked. However, I didn't lose any sleep over that one.

In addition to the "new realism" against the "grand subject", Leger presented in his lecture yet another this-versus-that cleavage in art, this time the age-long confrontation of Classicim versus Romanticism. But "quant á moi... I prefer the classical, Ingre, David." And of course he would, considering

the cast-iron spirit of his fugures, with solid, uncompromising outlines and metalic blues and full-strength yellows and reds. But therein lay his strength, direct, sincere, open.

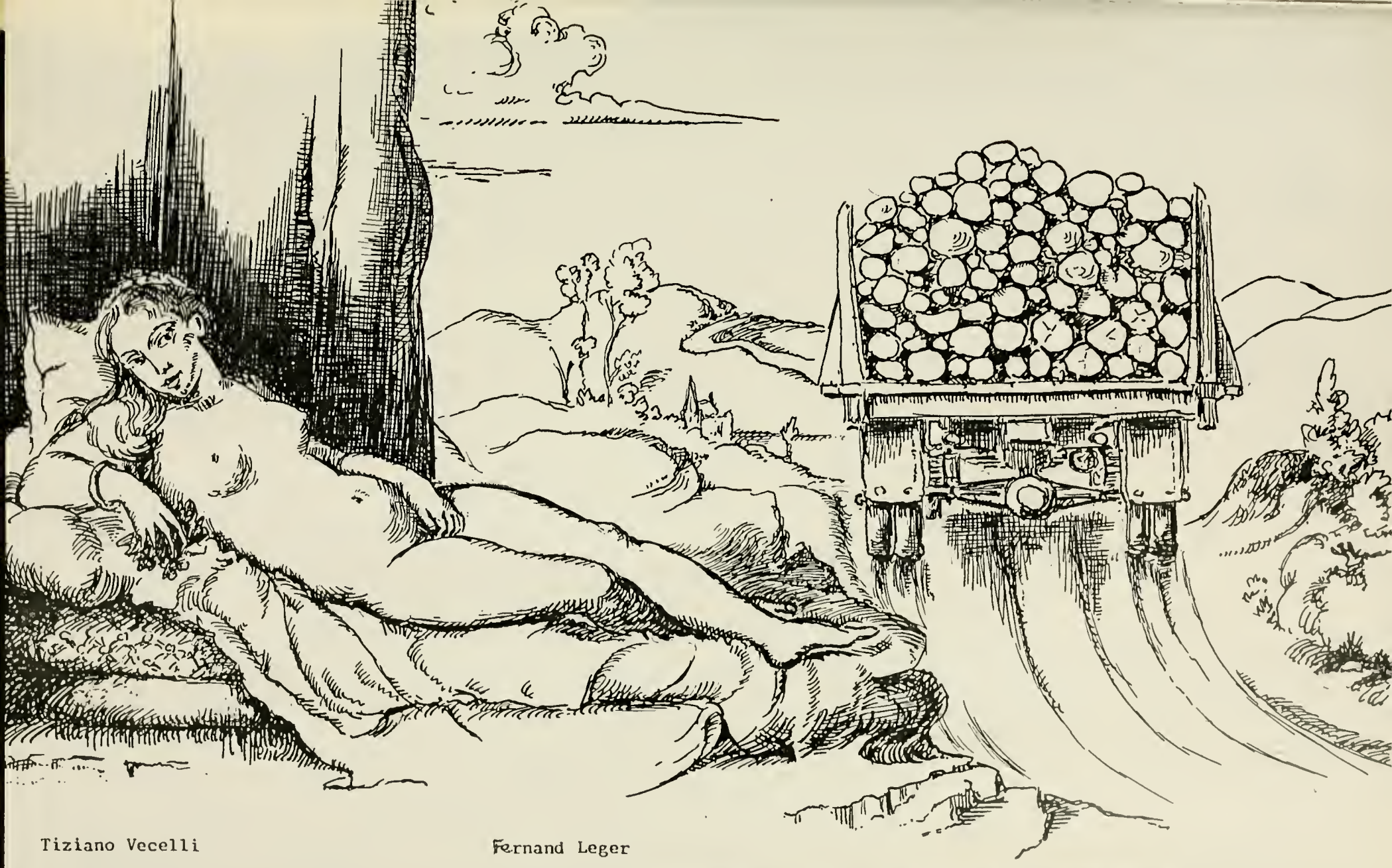
When on the wall of the college studio Leger saw a print of Raphael's "Disputá" (or was it "Scool of Athens"?) he remarked: "C'est le theatre, ce n'est pas la painture!" Next to it a still life by Bracque and he wrinkled his nose in disapproval: "Never liked his wok. It's all chiffon!" Some other painting we discussed were all chiffon to Leger, or else some were "sec." Whatever lacked "juice", as we would say, was sec, a highly descriptive term, I thought. Once he applied it to a mobile he had seen, which someone on the campus had made out of large thorns of a tree common in that region. When I took Leger to see the college art library, he was not interested: "I do, I do not read." And a doer and maker he indeed was. However, he had an abundance of opinions and a knowledge of the history of art. Then seeing nearby a small museum collection of Aegean as well as American Indian ceramics, he remarked with delight how eveywhere one goes in this country, there is always a museum, some sort of a collection. And everywhere he did go. The better to get acquanted with the country, Leger had taken a bus from coast to coast and so reached Mills College in California, where he spent some time as artist-in-residence.

My memorable contact with him was then renewed once more on my next trip to New York, when I was a guest at a dinner he had given and cooked himself at his studio on the south side of West 40th, overlooking Bryant Park. The meal was superb and we were enetrtained with the reminiscences of his Native Normandy - his youth; his loving relation to his mother; her grief when for the first time in his youth he had spent one night away from home; the great event when the family laundry was done once a month, and so forth. Our napkins were paper towels and the slices of bread came from a loaf he carved against his chest The other guest was Julian Green, whose FRench was so fluent and idiomatic that it out-Frenched Leger, and that

left me somewhere by the wayside. Of course, he was an expatriate, living and writing in Paris, in French, and now here only on a visit. After dinner Leger took us to the great north window of his studio, to show us the flickering and flashing of a narrow sea of red, orange, green and yellow electric signs up Sixth Avenue, a precious sight in Leger's eyes.

While the practice of art in my course was meant to instill sensitivity, the history of art, from the time of Titian's "Venus of Urbino" to the time of Leger's "New Realism" and the truckload of lumber that illustrated it, was to be seen as a path from heavenly inspiration to earthly observation -- a path that has now ended. But some still drive beyond the "dead-end" sign and what we are seing today is a mass of splinters and bits of wreckage whirling in the air. What is left is no longer a material for any academic discipline. It leads not to sensitivity but to the center of the ephemeral, fallible mortal ego, while sensitivity cultivated led to soul and love, than which there can be no higher goal.

That is why it was with great satisfaction that on my tour of some sixteen colleges and universities as my sabbatical leave project in 1949 I found every deparment of art turned into a department of design. And so the need of the time was met and we have reaped the fruit of that sound change ever since in every visual aspect of life.



Tiziano Vecelli
and his
Venus of Urbino

and

Fernand Leger
and his
Truckload of Lumber

the Alpha and Omega of Western painting

Dear Susan —

If by now you have received my "Minimemoirs," please tear out page 25 and replace it with the enclosed. Excuse the wishap and thank you -

J. Ver.

Walt Disney had a single word for the activity I am describing: "Racket." In a message, which in a strange way came from him to me, he wrote: "All art is a racket!" He meant, I took it, that the current art, even at that time, rested on values no higher than the shock it produces and the publicity it gets. This was at the time of Disney's "Fantasia," which I extoled in my classes as an example of a true American art and, being based on kinetic drawing, a true art of our time. I believed that a similar art form would have been practiced by the old masters if they had had it. Titian would have exchanged his canvas and easel for camera and screen. El Greco, too, For Titian painted in one-instance several successive scenes, diminishing into distance, as in his "Abduction of Europa" (Gardner, Boston) and El Greco did the same in his "Miracle of St, Mauritz" (Escorial). And there are other instances of a craving for pictorial motion at that time.

Imbued with such views, a student of mine traveled home at Christmas time (in the days of railroads!) and in the dining car spotted Walt Disney with his wife. Dying to meet him and tell him of the admiration imprated to her, she devised a cunning trick: she "inadvertendly" pressed her elbow against the bell-button at her table and kept it pressed until the waiters began running up and down the isle in confusion. She took that opportunity and introduced herself to the Disneys. (Why she had to shake a whole mountain just for a mouse - even a Mickey Mouse in this case, was puzzling to me, but such was her story.) She was asked to join them and so had an opportunity to tell Disney of her teacher's admiration. Then at the close of the visit Disney took a menue and on its back drew a large Mickey Mouse and then the words: "All art is a racket!" He signed it and asked her to take the souvenir to her professor on her return to the college. So she did and then asked if she could "own it part time." "Full time" was granted, though reluctantly.

3

During the sabbatical leave mentioned earlier, I could perceive "but through a glass, darkly" what was in later years to become my exclusive outlook on life and on man. In those later years I learned that there are always two, not one but two - a double vision in a sense, and we are to see the one as all and the other as - well, not really nothing, but prone to be proved to be nothing. The one is a tangible unreal, the other an intangible real. And so is everything and every one.

To be a bit more specific, one alone cannot be anything. God is one, we say, but that is in quite a different sense. He is one by virtue of being All. For in the very last analysis - or the very first - there are only two most basic things in the world (or outside of the world) - and those are heaven and earth. There cannot be less, nor more, than those two. And since men are a product of the interaction between heaven and earth, there are only two kinds of men (that is, men and women) and they are either of heaven or of earth, and all the admixtures in between.

Of that two-man basic division I first learned from that great and most original Jewish dissident theologian and, above all, organizer, without whom there would be -- safe to say - no Christianity today and no church. That man was Paul of Tarsus. In a letter he wrote to a church he had organized in the city of Corinth in Greece (the first of two letters) he said: "As we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." And then: "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is from heaven (not "the Lord from heaven") as

erroneously added — and the italics are mine). Now it is the second man that "doeth the works" — the works of art, and he does it through the first man. The first man can be false, frail, faulty, fallacious, and fallible, but he serves as the vehicle for the expression of the second man. That was certainly so in the case of Beethoven to an outstanding degree, but Michelangelo, Motzart, Bach, and others, they all had their own share of mortal frailty.

I witnessed this seeming anomaly at first hand when I went to call on the great Yugoslav sculptor Meštrović, as part of my sabbatical leave project. Mestrovic had fled his own country when the Communist regime set in and he had received a generous hosptiality at Syracuse University, where he established himself as sculptor in residence. I had met him on an earlier occasion, and this time it was a courtesy call, backed by a hope of seeing some of his latest work. But from the moment I sat down and was asked about my family in Belgrade, the great sculptor welcomed this oppotunity to vent all of his pent-up grievances which he had cherished against the late King Alexander, who was assassinated some years before by the Croatian separatists terrorists. The steady murmur went on, one cigafette lit from another in an uninterputed chain.

Thus the first man took over and the second man was left behind with the last strike of the hammer and the last stroke of the chisel. Two announcements for dinner by his son went unheeded. Undoubtedly all the grievances might have been fully justified, but one somehow expects a more philosophical acceptance of life by those who deal with the things of heaven. The first man was fully in command on that occasion. As we were parting I voiced my delight at the comfort and safety that surrounded him. "Well," he shrugged his shlders, "it is better than a concentration camp." But as the second man Meštrović had some of the most magnificent marbles of our time to his credit, such as his "Widows" of the Kossovo cycle.

A totally different picture presented itself when on the same sabbatical tour I visited another great sculptor, Carl Milles, who was now a sculptor-in-residence at Cranbrook Academy of Art at Ann Arbor, Michigan. This visit had been arranged by the director of the Academy, on whom I had called first; and needless to say the prestige of Sweet Briar had much to do with the easy opening of all the doors I approached. I went to Milles's house at the appointed time in the middle of the afternoon. He met me at the door and welcomed me as warmly as if I had been a dear old friend. He had been reading "An Album of Celestial Photographs" by Bedell, which on its back cover bore this quotation from Rubiyat: "When all the temple is prepared within, / Why nods the drowsy worshiper outside?" That same book he inscribed "From his friend, Carl Milles", enclosing several pages of his own typewritten observations and thoughts; similarly signed, and presented them both to me as the visit ended. But I am ahead of my story.

Throughout the visit I heard nothing but loving and appreciative and all-embrasing commentaries on art, on life. Then he took me into a large room full of Greek marbles, some whole, some fragments, some Roman copies, so filling the room that we could hardly wind our way through. "Every time I went abroad, I came back pennyless," he said, and how worth-while his profligacy proved to be. Milles pointed out this detail and that. Then he passed his hand lovingly up and down the back of a male torso. "Just look at this back! Few sculptors can do a good back. I can do it..." Not for a moment did this sound like conceit but merely an all-embracing love and appreciation, objective even toward himself. "But", and that was the only sad note heard, "I offered this whole collection to the United States government, but they never even answered. And now it will all go to the Sweedish government after I am gone."

When Milles told me how his advice to his students was "to drink wine instead of milk," that did not imply criticism as much as a desire for more verve, expressed in biblical connotations.

Then we came to a room, very large and high and empty, skylighted. In one corner on our left there stood high upon a steel pipe and resting on a steel base on casters, an almost life-size male figure in a horizontal descending attitude. This was the last of some twenty or so figures Milles had completed; after twelve years of work, for the Fountain of Faith, a cherished dream of a far-sighted citizen, Rober Marlow, at the National Memorial Park in Falls Church in Virginia. (This full information I owe to the great kindness and courtesy of Alexandria Chamber of Commerce.)

The figure was still in plasteline, completely finished and ready to be shipped to Italy for casting in bronze. It represented a man who, according to Milles's own commentary in the prospect of the Memorial Park, "was a romantic man and very sentimental" and "each day he cut one flower from the garden which they had together cherished, and presented it to his wife. He holds one in his hand to tell her they will start again where they left off. And when she awakens they will be happy again as before."

Then Milles wanted to show me this figure from all sides. Pulled it out of its corner, then got behind it, placed his fight foot on the corner of the steel plate of the stand. Then - I couldn't quite believe he would do it until it happened - he gave it a kick with all his might. The figure, soared across the room diagonally and toward the opposite corner, careening, gyrating widely, over the rough and warped old floor boards, trundling on its small casters, then coming to a stop, serene as ever.

Now I can assert this with unweavering and profound conviction: That figure would have crashed down headlong under any normal physical condtions and if anyone else had kicked it the same way. It defied every physical law. I could not believe my eyes. The weight was perhaps 200 pounds, the height about 7 feet, and the base hardly three feet square. I said nothing and Milles evidently saw in it nothing unusual at all. (The figure was so high for the sculptor to model it the way it would be seen in the finished monument.) It must have been

It must have been faith, that very faith, that is "as small as a grain of mustard seed." But there must have been more to that. The clay figure Milles had kicked was of the world beyond, on which and in which he had dwelt for twelve years while fashioning all the nineteen figures that had preceded it. Milles had lived in a state that trascends death and all the finite things of the earth, including its physical laws. In retrospect, such was the world of Milles and I was in it at the time. His glowing gentleness and unhampered love came from there, too.

Milles was in the realm that transcends the first man and is close to the second man, liberated from the binding finiteness of the earth. As for myself, I can still grasp the second man's infinite world only through the vehicle of finite units, strung alone like the beads of a necklace. I still cannot perceive an oak leaf as continuing after its brown and dry autumnal fall; until it reaches a perfect and ideal menora pattern, which had guided guided him but could not be real in life. And as with oak leaves, and other plants and animals, so with men. I see immortality in succession, not in uniterrupted state of being. But I cannot for a moment doubt the world beyond, in which Milles lived - and perhaps still does. For even now, as I write this, I seem to be aware of him, standing at my side.

The figures of the Fountain of Faith are portraits of people Milles had known. The boy who drowned following in his enchantment a bird that had landed on his hand; oblivious of the lake before him; the girls in Sweeden that had swam too far, the one drawned, the other rescued but joining her sister a few days later; a recluse university professor who lived in a cave, surrounded by tamed animals, whom Milles as a young man visited one year and the next he found the cave empty - the man had taken his own life and had taken the animals with him, as Peter Williams did with his cat. And many others.

On Milles's invitation, I returned in the evening. More conversation, more

listening on my part. I noticed a large animal figure, like a hypopotamus, in glazed, brightly colored ceramics. "It was done by one of my students and I liked it and bought it from her." Then he wanted to show me his precious possession, his Poussin. It was upstairs in their bedroom. As we approached the tall, continental double door (which must have made Milles feel at home), it was closed for the night. He knocked, then knocked again, then called "Olga" and "Olga" again, when a feable voice answered and Mrs. Milles, evidently as infinitely kind as Mr. Milles, withdrew into another room.

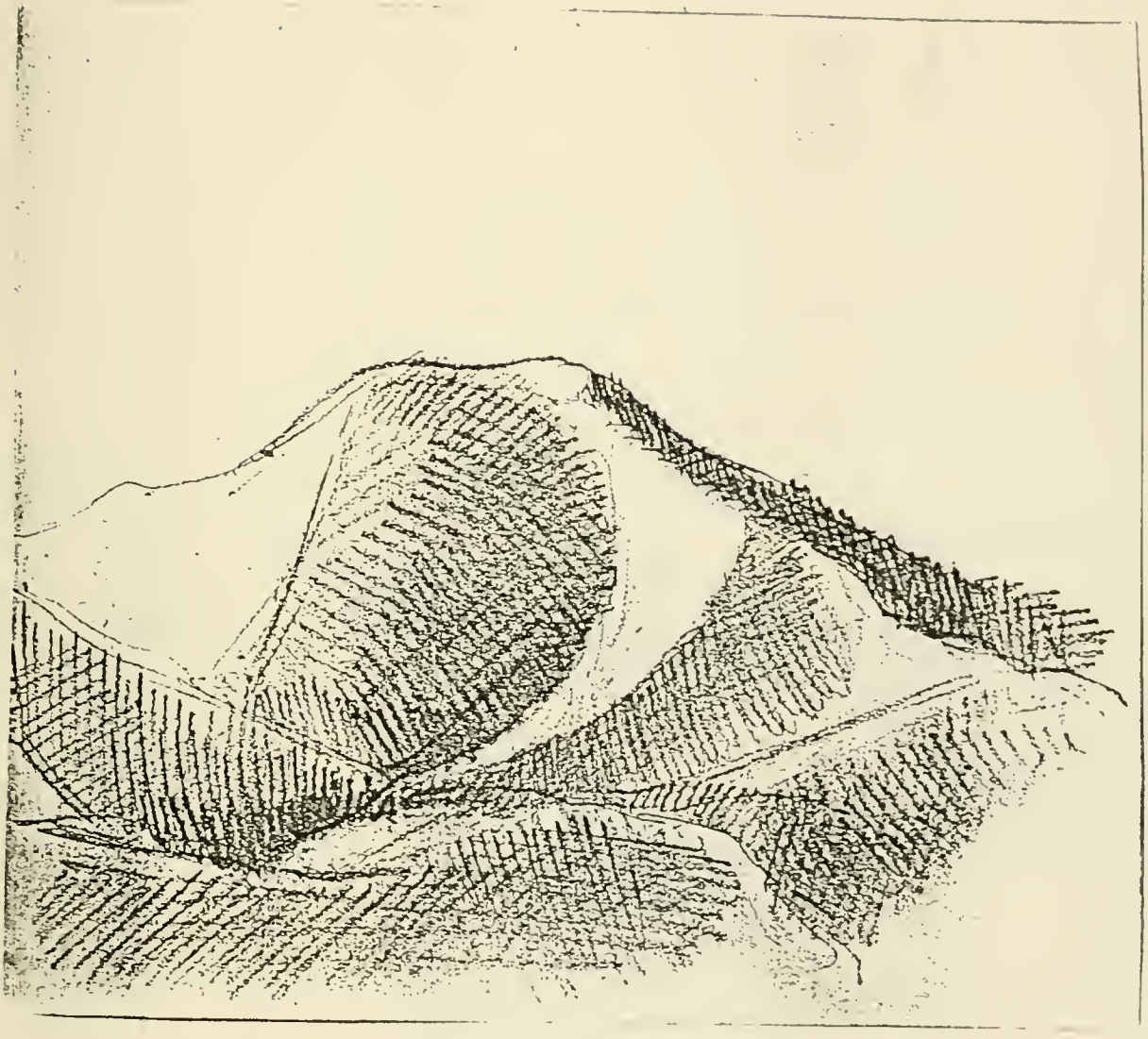
We entered the bed room, all in order, the bed made. Milles had brought with him a powerful flashlight and a large magnifying glass. Then we appoached a beautiful Poussin landscape, which reminded me of the one at the Metropolitan, later discovered to be by Francisque Millet, but could have well been by Poussin. It was over the bed, but we somehow managed to come close to it and then: "Just look at this detail" and Milles handed me the magnifying glass and brightly lighed the spot with his flashlight. Then another spot, and yet another. "The only way to look at a painting," he remarked.

How inadequate a companion I must have been through it all. But Milles was talking to the second man, not to me, the first man.

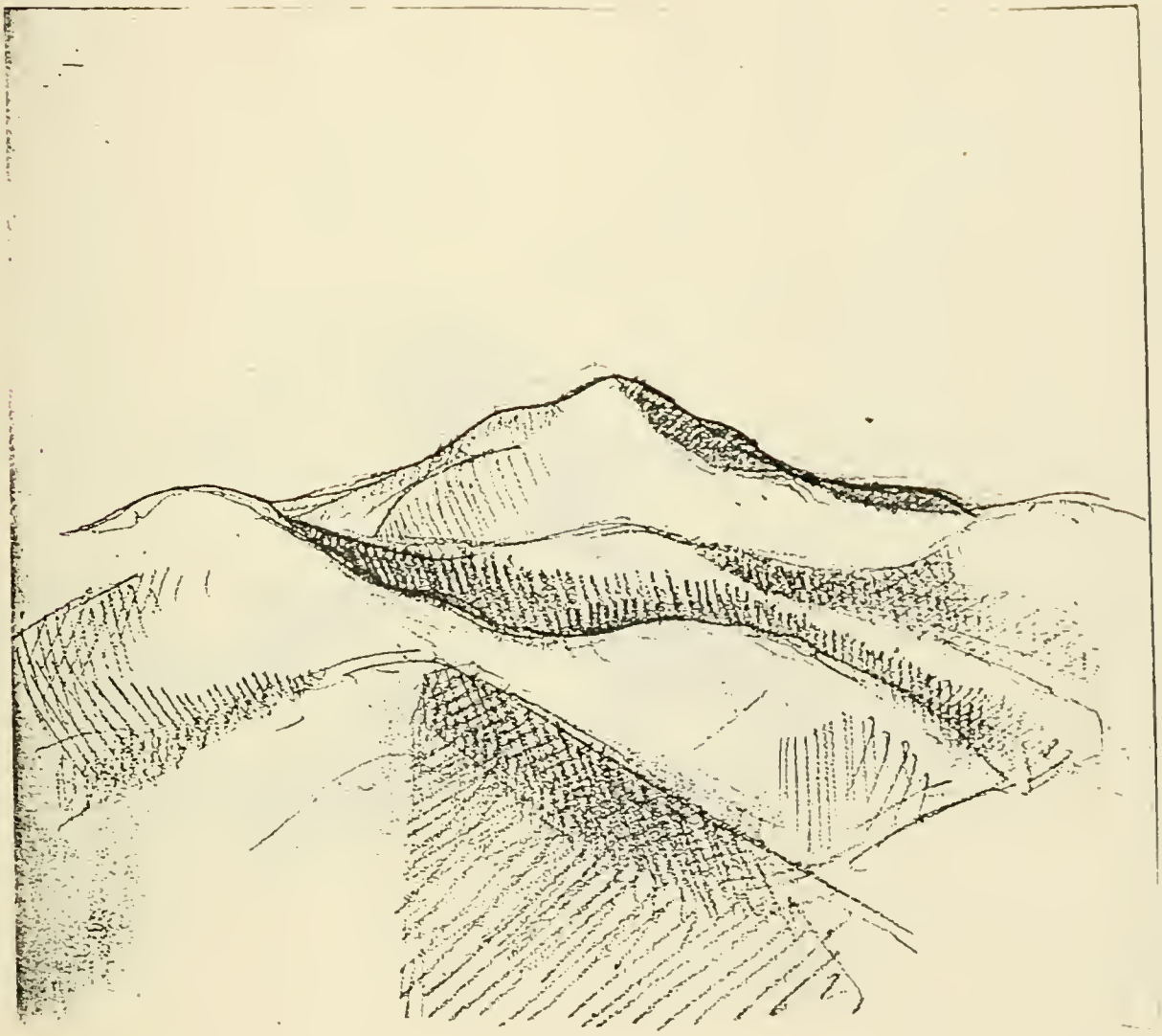
As I was taking my leave, I asked the great man if he would ever consider coming to Sweet Briar to speak to the students. "If someone like you asked me, yes, I would." Unforgivable and inexplicable dullness on my part, but on my return to the college I got busy and never pursued the great opportunity that could have blessed so many. That was just one of the devastating failures that haunt me, the first man. Milles was 75 when I knew him in 1979 and he attended the dedication of the "greatest work of my life," as he conceded, at Falls Church in 1952. He joined his people of the Fauntain of Peace shortly after. It might be added that Robert Marlow first approached Milles with a letter in 1939, asking him to do the Fountain of Peace, but, having no answer, he went to see him a year later, and the letter was found unopened under a "disorderly pile of paper."

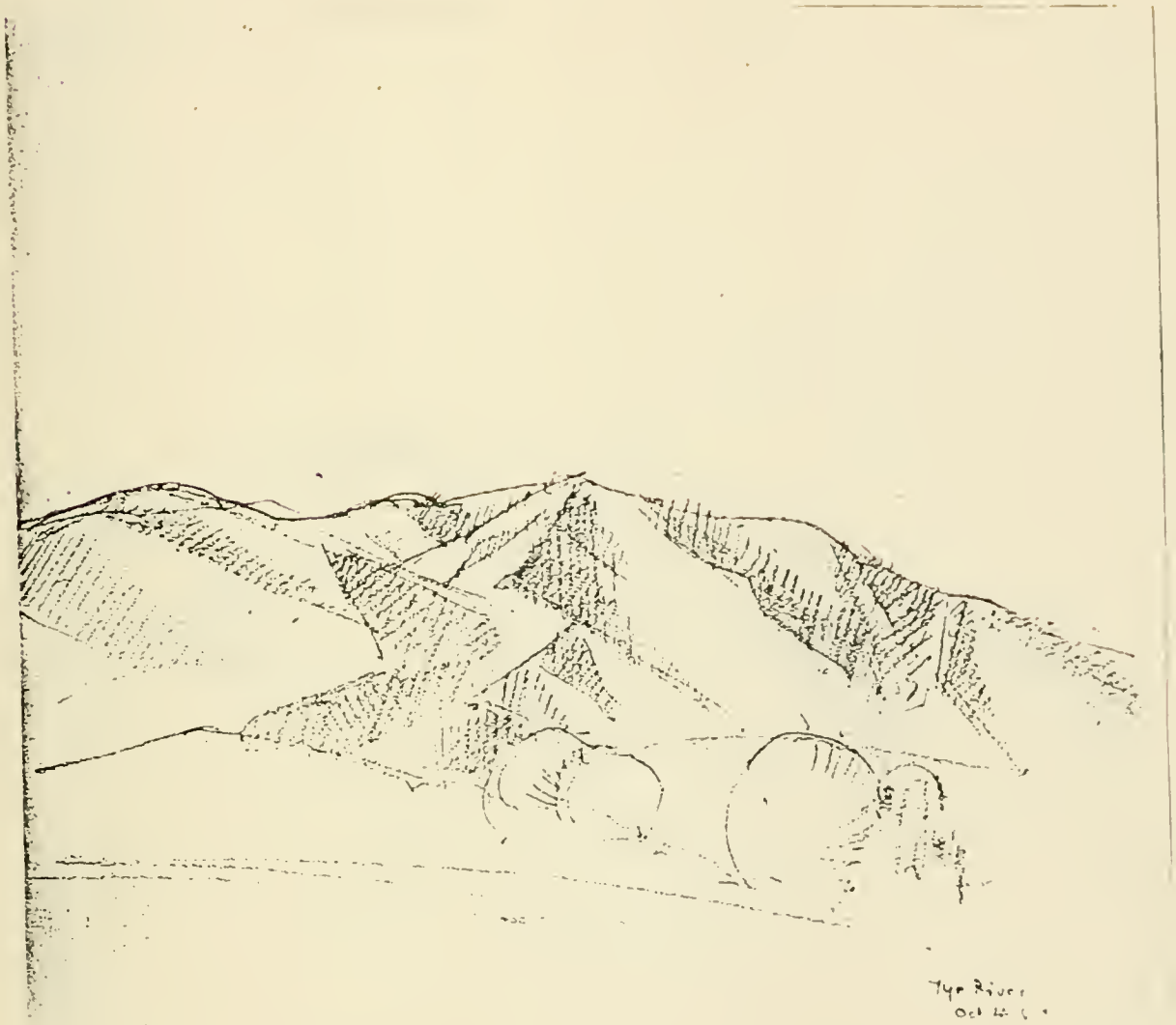
But destiny caught up with him.

Luke gives an even simpler concept of the first and the second man than Paul, when he writes: "Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left." (17:36) The one that is "taken" sheds off and leaves behind all the shortcomings that have hurt him and haunted him. The first man is the artificial flower, made of wire, cotton, and paper, as Ouspensky once wrote. But the man that is "left" shines through all great art. Pavarotti refers to his own voice as "she" - the second man, that is, woman. Beethoven's first man was so blatantly objectionable, boorish, uncouth, and yet that first man was not kept altogether out of Beethoven's musical creations either. It seems to me that the calculated ugliness of his Great Fugue is conspicuously of the first man. My friend, Ernest Zechiel thought it was due to deafness, but I think that premise is denied by the fact that in the same breath, so to speak, Beethoven could be rhapsodic, when he wanted to be, as in the 3rd movement of Opus 135 - or in the 2nd of 132, which bear no trace of the angry discords. Beethoven shook his fist at heaven when he felt like it, as he did, it is said, at his death bed. Or did he just thumb his nose at us? But be that as it may, the potential nothingness of the first man must be born in mind - and demonstrated.



"The land of the romantic and powerfully dynamic formations of the Sleeping Giant"





EPILOGUE

My Virginia was a land of the romantic and powerfully dynamic formations of the Sleeping Giant and of the blue range that was a steady backdrop to all that went on. To me it was a land of the best English tradition; of Southern grace; of the gentleness of black people, who carried their subservience with love and cheer and unquestioned willingness. I am especially thinking of Sterling Jones and Sam Hutchins, the two janitors I delt with daily. Grace and affection and respectfulnes and willingness marked everything they did for me. Their quick and ready outburst of laughter was a reaction that met every slightest show of kindness that came from us.

A few years after I left the college I heard how Sterling - and no one could guess his age - had been losing his memory and one cold winter's night he rose out of bed, dressed and wandered out of the house unnoticed. He got lost in the woods and was found frozen to death. Of his gentle responses one stands out: All the help on campus were taken to attend a concert by the Washington Symphony one Sunday afternoon. The next morning I asked Sterling how he liked it. He was enthralled. "Doctor [we were all "doctors"] next to eat'n and serving the Lawd, music is the best thing."

As for the gentleness and the nobility of the white people, one example: Some friends, whon I hadn't known very long, once asked me: "Will you come to see us" on such-and-such date? "I would be delighted. What time would be best?" "O [after a slight hesitation] about six." What an awkward hour; I thought, but I accepted and when the date arrived I came. Immediately I noticed a long table set in the garden ("guiyarden"), laden with delicacies and my embarrassment began. Half an hour later first guests began arriving. When they were all

assembled, I had to leave for I had an evening engagement of another kind. Then the embarrassment of this insensitive Yankee became profound. He had been uncouth enough not to grasp the delicacy of an invitation in which the word "dinner" would have been blunt and tantamount to saying: "Come and we want to feed you." Such a subtlety this Yankee had to learn the hard way.

When after eighteen years of that pleasant dream, marred only by some nightmares of my own making, I left to go north, I felt like a trator. But it had all been a period of schooling and evidently I was not to presume that I really belonged there permanently.

Then another cycle of eighteen years followed, this time in a land of industry of the hard-working Pennsylvania German stock; a land of slate and limestone mountains and of pines and oaks and doogwood, all blazing white in the spring and flaming red in the fall, - mountains so ancient that their peaks, once rivaling the Rockies, are now but level-top long ranges, having filled, through many millions of years, the Dellaware Riverbed with silt hundreds of feet deep. None of those rolling blue romantic and dynamic formations, but the Pennsylvania mountains have a different beauty, all under a green velvet of thick forestry. It is also a land of upright and prosperous looking barns, hung with "hexes", which is a crude and unjust term for the presumably decorative disks. These are painted with flower designs always based on the number six, the six implied in the "consider the lilies" of the New Testament and in the Creation of the Old Testament. It was the same six that Henry Thoreau had in mind when he spoke of snowflakes as the "masterpieces of the number six, six, six," and which he saw as the "glorious sweepings of heaven's floor."

Those "glorious sweepings" however, got to be much for us in this age of motorized comfort and so one fall, seven years ago, we heard the ceaseless chattering from those V-formations up in heaven above and thought it had spelled out the word "Sanibel". So we decided to follow the Canada

My dear friend, Celius Dougherty, read my Minimemoirs of Sweet Briar Days, written in ordinary prose, but when he came to a passage containing an impression of my present Sanibel life, he, without changing a word, poured it into the form of a poem. He sent it to me with these words: "I couldn't resist copying your words, for it seemed to me that by this time I know a poem when I see it. I always remember your little photograph of the egret, but now your poem will keep it for me in a still more permanent way." This is the poem, as Celius fashioned it out of my words:

Egrets are our friends,
Tame, unafraid, ever solitary,
Always still, silent, waiting.
Slender their necks
And even thinner, black, tall legs,
And one wonders
How they ever function.

One egret came to our church steps one Sunday morning,
Walking slowly up the steps,
And then in through the open door,
In and down the aisle,
Friendly, cautious, just looking around,
Then back again and out
In cautious dignity.

I thought how nice it would be,
When my time came
To go out and wherever I came from,
If I could go out
In that same cautious dignity,
For I too have looked around,
I have examined the temple I have entered, too,
And not knowing it was a temple,
Much like that egret.

But unlike that egret,
I had to cope with evil in myself
In order to gain a glimpse of the good,
And to know that good is all -
And all is good.

geese-down and that's where we are now. Thus the third eighteen-year cycle ended, the second being in Virginia, the first in New York, which was but a period of schooling for all that was to come.

As Sweet Briar was an enchanted plantation, so Sanibel is an enchanted island. It is wholy foreign to the red and gold maples and deep green pines and owesome mountains we leave behind in the fall. Pelicans, yes, and gulls, too, but the pheasants and hawks and night hawks of the region of Cherry Valley are - or were - something else, before they were all but wiped out by pesticides and buckshot. I remeber how once, when I was composing an 8-mm film of those "sixes" of the lily and of the atom, I looked out of my studio window and up toward the sky six hawks were circling in interlaced orbits against the blue sky. A minute later they were all gone. in Cherry Valley,

The deer are still around, but in ever-dimindishing numbers. Imagine, just for fun, a reversed picture, with the deer killing men just for fun and carrying them home wrapped across the hoods of their cars! On Sanibel no one shoots, and wild life knows it and is tame. It is an island of love and equanimity, even if the palms and the flatness do not take place of mountains and "real" trees. Egrets are our friends, tame, unafraid, ever solitary, always still, silent, and waiting. Slender thin necks and even thinner black tall legs, and one wonders how they ever function. One egret came to our church steps pne Sunday morning, walked slowly up the steps and then in through the open door, in and down the isle, friendly, curious, just looking around. Then back again and out, in cautious dignity.

I thought how nice it would be, when my time came to go out, and where I came from, if I could go out in that same cautious dignity. For I have looked around, too. I have examined the temple I had entered, too, and not knowing it was a temple, much like that egret. But unlike that egret, I had to cope with evil in myself in order to gain a glimpse of the good and to know that good is all - and all is good.

APPENDIX

I

Like the Biblical "woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor," Doris could "divine", and then much more. Her "Endor" was called "Chickencoop" and was an upstairs tea room on west 58th, just off Fifth Avenue in New York City. Doris was highly educated, of a distinguished family, we were told, and had lived in the Orient with her husband in the military service and her high art allegedly stemmed partly from those days. Now she was reading palms of any curious and willing diner at the tea room and for a fee of 50 cents! We were a party of four. Our host, Frank Shields, who was of the Barbasol (the first brushless shaving cream) fortune add several other fortunes, was our host. That was all back in the mid-forties. Frank was curious to know what Doris had to say.

And so she came to our table and proceeded, one by one, studying the palm minutely, never looking up, and divulging with business-like detachment the intimate side of our characters, minutely, accurately, mercilessly. Apparently there was more to it than the lines of our palms. When complimented on the amazing results, she remarked that it was easy to "read" the palms of those who provided her with sufficient material, but in some cases of empty lives, "I had to cross my legs to keep the current within me," she explained, divulging a communion beyond the palm lines. At any rate, here is one example of Doris's penetrating art. She told Frank he had lost three fortun first on the air, second in silver, third in dies. So it was: First the Barbasol Radio, or air, advertizing, ending in failure; second, a silver mine that failed; third, a die contract with the German army, that was cut of by the First World War.

When my turn came Doris came upon something that will make a curious a

finishung touch to these Minimemoirs. First and off-nahd she declared "this man does etchings, pen-and-ink drawings; the tips of the fingers are show=. ing that." Then she put forth, with equal matter-of-fact assurance: "This man has royal blood. That is quite plain, right here." And then she went on to other sharp and undeniable statements. Be that as it may, I had nothing to do with my family past, one way or another, and whatever may be uncovered about it can be neither to my credit nor discredit. But the Estensi, as the House of Este was known, might shed some light on the complexities of the experiences presented in the Minimemoirs.

A few years before the Doris episode, my studies of art on New York took me frequently to the Metropolitan Museum. Close to the north-west door of the first gallery upstairs, there hund a state portrait of Alfonso d'Este by Titian and every time I went by on my way to the rest of the Havemayer collection, this portrait exerted a special pull on me, more than anything else at the museum. He reminded me strongly of my father, but that "was neither here nor there." The criterion was that of art, this being, in my sight, one of Titian's best protraits, in its subdued, discrete way. But the attraction was less tangible, more subliminal, stretching back in time, it appears, and it finally ended in my copying the portrait.

Thr process of copying was like associating with the master himself. I had to pry deeply, analyzing each mimutest brushstroke, sometimes so subtle and elusive that it was undistinguishabe. Often I had to say: "It is and it isn't at the same time." Thus the association became close not only with Titian but with his subject, Alfonso d'Este. This then led me to the Encyclopedia Britannica, where what I found is cosiderably condensed here.

The strong influence of the Estensi on Italian politics begins with Nicolo III (1393-1441) although the two preceding Nicolos had politican and cultural merits of their own. But Nicolo III was quite a boy, as we would

say today." He was known for his sensuality and there was a saying in Ferrara: "On both sides of the River Po they were all Nicolo's sons." He beaded his son and his own young second wife, for they were caught in adultery. At the same time he sponsored Christian faith, and among other activities in that line he tried to bring the Western and Eastern churches together. He died suddenly, possibly poisoned, in 1441. But it was he that raised the Estensi to a great importance in Italian politics.

Nicolo III chose as his successor his illegitimate son Leonello (1441-50), who raised Ferrara to great distinction in the arts and culture and became the first Duke of Ferrara. Leonello's half brother Ercole I (1471-1505) raised the House of Este to an even higher prestige by marrying the daughter of the King of Naples. One of his three daughters, Beatrice, was married to Lodovico Sforza of Milan. His eldest son was married first to Anna Sforza of Milan, then to the famous Lucrezia Borgia, the daughter of Pope Alexander VI. The old man Ercole was a great patron of the arts, sponsoring poetry, espcially Ariosto, as well as theater and music. Under him Ferrara became one of the first cities of Europe.

Ercole was succeeded by Alfonso I (1505-34) - our Alfonso. His two brothers he had sentenced to death, as they plotted to overthrow him. Then came the war with Venice in 1509, which Ferrara won, due largely to Alfonso's high ability in the field of engineering, especially artillery design. (That is why in Titian's portrait Alfonso's right hand rests on the mouth of a facetted bronze barrel of a cannon. My copy was in two parts, head and hand.)

To his own detriment Alfonso sponsored French interests in Italy, Pope Julius II didn't like that at all and he excommunicated him. He was succeeded by his son, Ercole II (1534-59) who married the daughter of King Louis XII of France. Ercolo's son Alfonso II (1559-970 was the fifth and the last duke of Ferrara, who tried unsuccessfully to become king of Poland. After his death Ferrara was [illegible]. In more recent times, the line goes over to Austria and to Franz Ferdinand,

murdered in Sarajevo in 1914; to his duaghter Zita and to her son the Archduke Robert, still living as the last heir of the Estensi.

A glance back at my own family takes me no farther back than 1782, when Marco de Rocco, an artisan of some sort, was born in Feltre, privince of Treviso, northern Italy - or so it was said - but when in Italy in 1928 I was told at the city hall of Feltre: "No, your family comes from Beluno," and the kind official pointed out through the open window toward the glimmering outline of Beluno, beyond some green fields and tufts of cypresses, framed by the open window ; all like a Ghirlandaio painting. "But no records exist," he continued, "neither there nor here, earlier than the Napoleonic Wars, when all the documents were destroyed." Marco's grandson, my grandfather, Giovanni, later Jovan, came to Belgrade as a professor of calligraphy, free-hand drawing, add geometry.

On my mother's side there was less room for far-flung speculations on distant ancestry. The recollection reaches no farther than my mother's bachelor uncle, who raised her after the death of her parents. He was a professor of humanities and an amateur astronomer. He was the founder of the national theater in what was then the little principality of Serbia, not long from under the Turkish rule, soon to become a kingdom. Later he took the young crown-prince on a tutoring tour abroad.

Then there was my mother's first cousinm, a bachelor also, who was a proffesor of history, a writer, and a poet ("Serbinn Mark Twain", someone on this side of the Atlantic said). I still remember tha magic pattern of many colors, with red and gold outstanding, on the cover of his black lacquer tobacco box, as at the age of five I sat at his knee, while he rolled his cigarette out of silken tobac My leaning toward red and gold seems to stem from that moment. And that is as close as we get to royalty on this side.

So ends my quest. There are some who believe that we have a knowledge of our ancestors' lives stored away in what is called the subconscious. But

the final decision as to whether or notthere ever was anything to what Doris so confidently and emphatically declared, I mus leave in the realm of my fond memory of that remarkable woman.

Finally and by way of footnote to the elaborate geneology just presented, it might be added that I was born January 4, 1897 and that I came to America in 1921, for which I am eternally grateful.

APPENDIX

II

The preceding Minimemoirs are weighted heavily on the side of what some may call occultism. One of the meanings Webster's Dictionary gives to the word occult is: "Beyond the scope of the understanding; mysterious," which is applicable in our case. Another meaning relates to "alchemy, magic, astrology and other arts...involving fivination, incantation, magical formulae, etc." and nothing can be further from the meaning applicable here. Lumping together of such disparate "arts" misses the point. Alchemy, as it was seen and practiced by Isaak Newton and some others was a real and respectable science, not superstition or magic, and so was astrology. Nevertheless, these additonal cases of things that are "beyond the scope of understanding" and "mysterious" are given here at the very end, that they might be easily ignored by those who "have had enough."

My friend Parker Fillmore came to visit me and events that followed I find noteworthy for their relatedness.

As Parker was eating breakfast, the nife broke in two in his hand; the knife was sturdy and the slice of bacon he was cutting was soft.

I left Parker with Dora Raymond while I went to finish a sketch in the field. (What the urgency was escapes me now, after thirty-six years, and it only seems like a callous and selfish lack of hospitality, which I only can hope it wasn't the case.) As I sketched, the folding chair broke under me and collapsed.

Dora had invited a young, beginning writer to meet Parker, who was accomplished in the field. Later she told me "He had handed the torch over to her; it was a symbolic occasion."

After that visit Parker complained about indigestion, went out into the boxwood garden and was found dead a little later.

In the evening DDora and I sat in her living room in stunned silence, waiting for the telephone central to obtain permission and put through my call to Parker's wife's unlisted number. Dora asked me to read aloud out of any book from the shelf, to pass time. The first sentence out of the first book was on death. I closed the book and put it back. This was repeated two more times, each time with a book picked out at random. We gave up.

The following mornong the news came over radio it was D-Day and the allied invasion of Normandy had begun.

Some months later and with the help of mutual friends in New York I had a granit stone installed on Parker's grave in Amherst. It appeared not quite upright in place and I went with a plumbob to check. It startled me as it began circling in my hand wider and wider. Something impelled me to take the plumbob lower to where the body had lain and it began oscilating widely and powerfully.

This was the same brass plumbbob I had bought in Rome after a visit to a boyhood friend, then a chemical engineer with the Chiris perfume factory in Grass, in the south of France. This company had kept on its payroll plumbob dowsers, whose duty was to determine hhe presence of underground water before a field could be rented or purchased for the cultivation of jasmine. My friend had learned the art from them. Now he entertained me until two in the morning by, among

manifestations of the same art, determining the sex of of each person from a heap of photographs, well shuffled and turned face down. The circles revealed a male, the oscillations a female. It never failed.

As I returned to the States I continued the experiments, always successfully, even with printed pictures. I have not kept it up. The initial experiment my friend had sbown me was over the palm of the hand, in the masculine case a circle, as if to accommodate the positive sign, and in the feminine case oscillating, as if inscribing a negative sign. All of which led me later to undersant better the meaining and the finction of the ancient swastika symbol.

Another ancient and universal symbol, the hexagram, came with its meaning into my life when I was teaching the role of the primary and secondary colors, as they all correspond to the points of the triangles, three and three. It came to me in a dream, with all its ramifications. And shortly after that I seemed to have been led to rise at down one day and go out to a high point, from which I could see most of the horizon. The sky was completely overcast a solid gray and no sun in sight. But a double rainbow stretched uniterrupted from horizon to horizon, a highly emotional experience for me. This led to the awareness of the six number six, particularly as it appears in what is to me an allegory of the human consciousness in the form of the six "days of creation" in Genesis, I saw it also in the "covenant between me and the earth" (Gen. 9:13) between heaven and earth, life being an interaction between the two.

It all falls into its proper place if we but distinguish between those two men we have been talking about - the <u>first man</u> and the <u>second man</u>. Whatever is "occult" is of the first man. Whatever is real and eternal is of the <u>second man</u>. Everything would be fine in the world if the two were not constantly confused. And so end the <u>Minimemoirs</u>.

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